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# Santa Ynez Valley

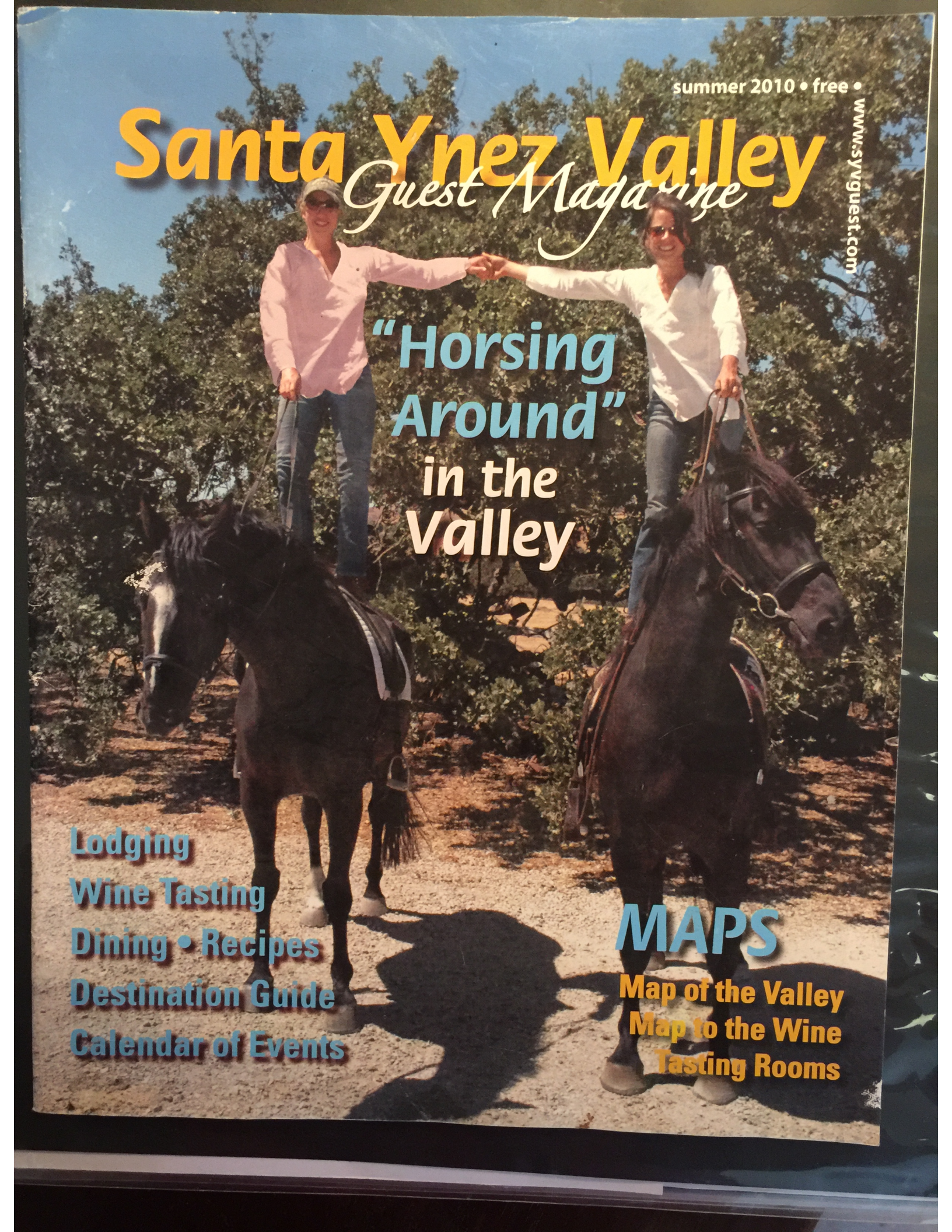
*Guest Magazine*

## "Horsing Around" in the Valley

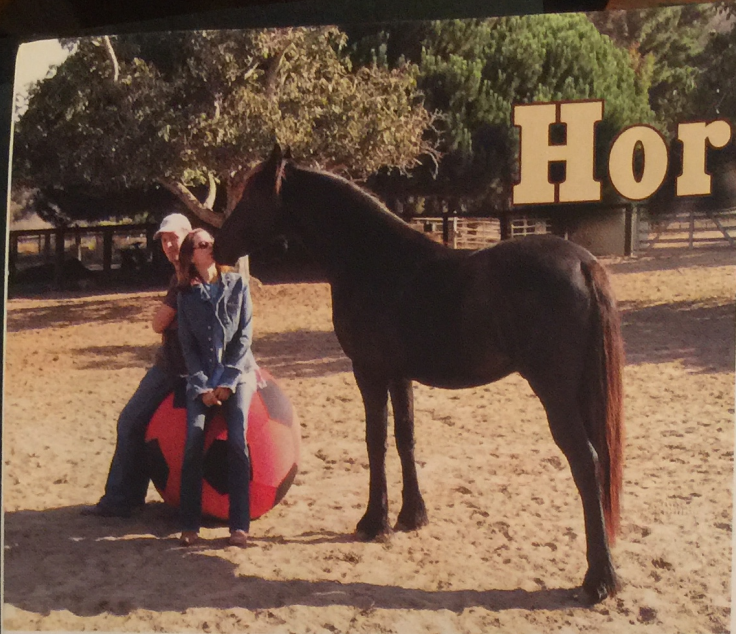
- Lodging
- Wine Tasting
- Dining • Recipes
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- Map of the Valley
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# Horsing Around in the Santa Ynez Valley

By  
Jessica Schley

**R**un. Jump. Kick up your heels. Roll in the grass. Go ahead. That's what we do around here for fun. Ask any local. This is a horse community after all, and it's not just the horses that horse around.

"I'm taking a break and fulfilling my childhood horse fantasies right now," Valley resident Catherine Gallegos says. With the abundance of golden rolling hills, horse facilities, and horse activities galore, that's an easy goal to accomplish here in the Santa Ynez Valley. Every day, there's always something new happening in our local horse community – and best of all, most of these activities are highly visitor-friendly. A little exploring is all it takes – and a dash of child-like philosophy helps, too.

The secret to life, Catherine jokes, is to romp and play and horse around as much as possible. After her long career as a conflict correspondent, editor, and human rights advocate, Catherine is finally taking some time off to do exactly that – and she says she's enjoying every peaceful minute of her life here in the Valley. Instead of interviewing presidents and dictators, Catherine is currently relaxing a bit and focusing on the nuances of life – including gently breaking her husband's young Friesian, Nico, while preparing her own Dutch mare, Willow, for competition.

"Here in this beautiful, quiet valley, it is as though we have stepped back in time. Sometimes it is important for us humans to focus on the simplest things – on our re-

lationship with nature, with animals, and with the friends we are so grateful to have in our lives," Catherine says, adding, "For me, horses are a symbol of a simpler era, before the world became so modern and busy. That's what I love so much about this incredible Valley. There are horses, cowboys, and nature everywhere, and to me, these are wonderfully kindred spirits."

Catherine is an international caliber dressage competitor. Catherine's husband, Victor, is another local notable, general manager and director of winemaking at renowned Sea Smoke Cellars, a top Pinot Noir producer. "Our life here with our horses is not just a hobby for us, but a way of life,"

Victor says, adding, "We enjoy exploring on horseback together, and living surrounded by nature."

You might call it "joi d'equus."

Catherine and Victor combined their talents to launch The Eqwinerie, a company that blends Victor's passion for winemaking with Catherine's love of horsemanship. They help each other in both pursuits. Catherine travels to Spain each year to help Victor make Melis and Elix, two delicious red wines handmade from their family vineyard in the renowned Priorat appellation ([www.MelisPriorat.com](http://www.MelisPriorat.com)). At home in the Santa Ynez Valley, Victor enjoys helping Catherine manage their small training and

**Above, Catherine and Victor Gallegos "horse around" with one of their Friesians. Below, visitors enjoy watching the miniature mares and foals in the park-like setting of Quicksilver Ranch in Solvang.**

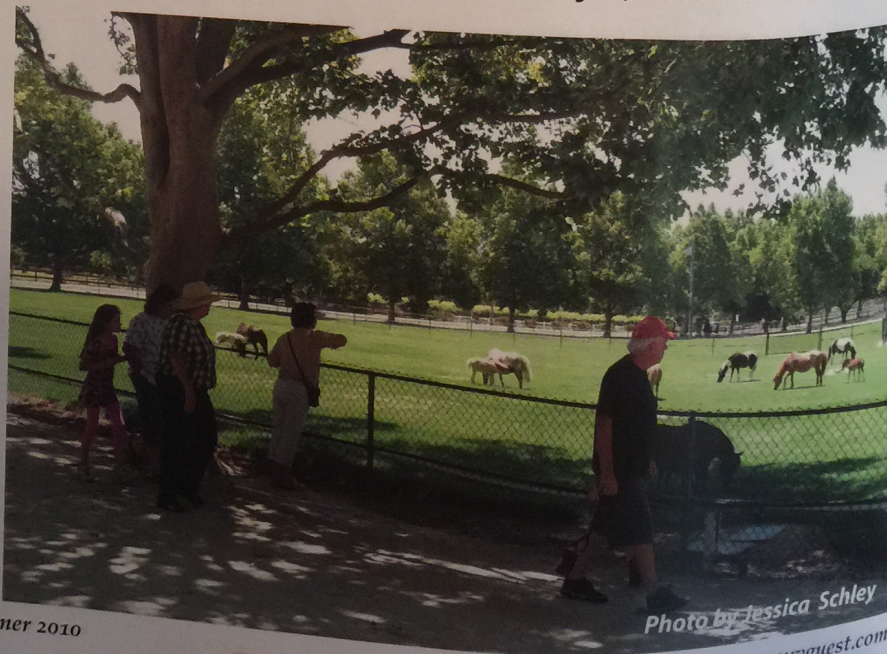


Photo by Jessica Schley

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small training and breeding program.

There are many ways both visitors and locals can share in the Valley's "joi d'equus." One of the easiest is to take a ride through Solvang on the "Honen," which is Danish for "horse-drawn street car." This beautifully restored vehicle is pulled by two gorgeous Belgian Draft horses (see photo on page 7) and has a regular pick up and drop off spot in front of the Visitors' Center on Copenhagen Drive (see our centerfold map).

Another popular horse destination for visitors is Quicksilver Ranch, just outside Solvang on Alamo Pintado Road, a lush green pasture wonderland filled with champion miniature horses and their foals. Children and adults alike enjoy watching the knee-high horses and their babies frolic together, their long manes and tails flowing.

Follow any road through our Valley, and you will marvel at the diversity of extraordinary horse breeds that flourish here.

If you wish to pull on your boots and go for a ride, simply rent a horse at Rancho Oso (call 805-683-5110), selecting from a one-hour or two-hour guided trail ride that meanders through some of our most magnificent back country. Local and visiting horse owners often trailer their own mounts into Rancho Oso, enjoying day rides as well as overnight stays there

(805-683-5686), as well as at Cachuma Lake (805-686-5050).

If you wish to purchase a horse, The Santa Ynez Valley boasts dozens of world-class breeding ranches that you may visit.

One of these, Cielo Celeste, graces the pasturelands just outside the township of Santa Ynez. Owner Celeste Huston breeds, trains and sells Gypsy Vanner Horses, a dramatic and colorful breed that is relatively new to the U.S., but long cherished in the United Kingdom and Ireland. For more information about these special horses, see the ad on page 6 and story on page 35. To visit, call 805-688-8020.

Another favorite recommendation is Rancho de la Florecita, five minutes north of Santa Ynez, close to the picturesque town of Los Olivos. Brian and Terry Jarchow have owned, bred, trained and sold Peruvian Paso Horses for more than 20 years. For more information about their beautiful, gentle horses, see their ad and story on page 35. To make an appointment, call 805-688-1447.

If you are content as an equestrian spectator, stop by the Santa Ynez Valley Equestrian Center on South Refugio Road. On weekends you'll often find a roping, rein-



**Elicio Ortez rides Rides Cielo Celeste Farm's Gypsy stallion St. Claims at the staging grounds for a Solvang Parade.**

ing, or jumping competition in progress.

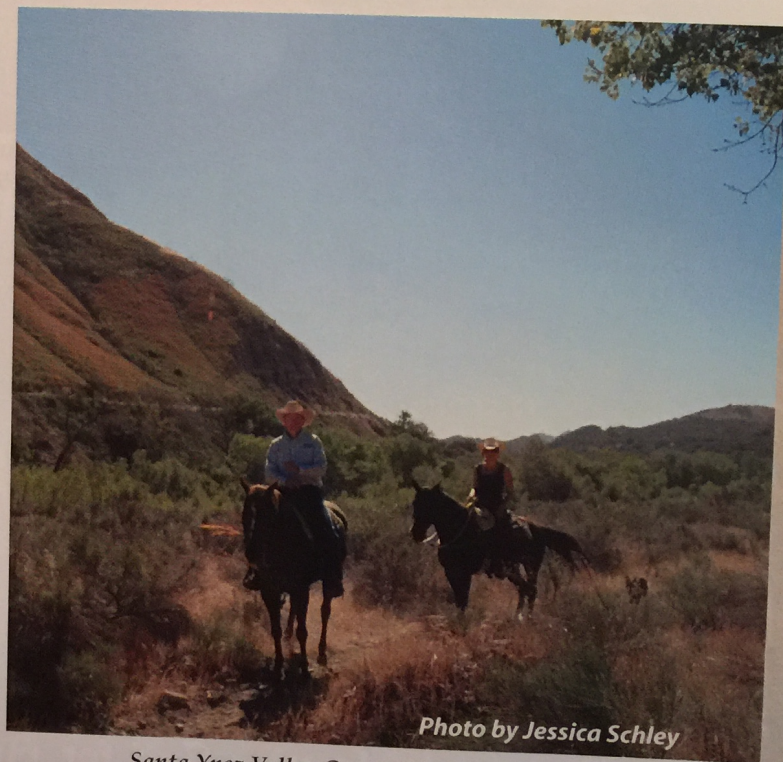
On quiet days, you can still enjoy watching excellent riders training in the facility's three practice arenas. Sharing the same address is The Santa Ynez Valley Therapeutic Riding Program, a tremendously inspiring facet of our deeply horse-centric community.

We hope that during your visit to the Santa Ynez Valley, you do take time to share in our "joi d'equus" – our way of life.



**Above, Terry and Brian Jarkow's granddaughter Tessa Brown adjusts a stirrup for her cousin Luke Vejvoda, riding RDLF Soberio (superb in Spanish) at Rancho de la Florecita. Right, two riders enjoy the wide open spaces of Rancho Oso. If you too want a trail ride, call the Rancho Oso stables at 805-683-5110.**

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**Photo by Jessica Schley**